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The War
The Farm
and . . .
The Farmer

By

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THE WAR, THE FARM, AND THE FARMER.

By HERBERT QUICK.

The farmer everywhere loves peace. The American farmer especially loves peace. Since the dawn of history, the farmer has been the man who suffered most from war. All that he possesses lies out of doors in plain sight, and is spoil of war—his house, his grain, his live stock. He knows that he pays the price of war “in steer and gear and stack,” and that the flames that light the skies in the rear of every invading army are consuming the things that yesterday represented his life work, and the life labors of past generations of farmers—the little coral islands of comfort and wealth that decades of toil on the farm builds up.

But the farmer everywhere is a warrior when war is the only thing which will make and keep him free—either a warrior or a serf. He can not rally to the colors as quickly as can the dwellers in the cities, because it takes longer to send to the farms than to the cities the fiery cross of the call to arms. It takes longer to call the farmers from the fields than the city dwellers from the shops; for many do not hear the first blast of the trumpet, and others do not at first understand its meaning because they have not had the time to talk the matter over with their acquaintances on the street corners, in the stores, on the cars, in the clubs, and at other gatherings, and instead of reading half a dozen extras a day, the farmer may read weekly papers only instead of dailies, and must have more time in a sudden emergency to make up his mind.

The work of the fields, the care of the live stock, and the mud and slush of the long road to town are all obstacles to that sudden rush of news which sometimes carries the cities away in mad outbursts of excitement.

It is impossible to set the farmers of the United States on fire by means of any sudden spark of rumor or to blow a chance catch of flame among them into a conflagration with any hand bellows of artificial agitation; but when the farmers do ignite they burn with a slow, hot fire, which nothing can put out. They are sometimes the last to heat up, but they stay hot, and in a long fight they are always found sturdily carrying the battle across No Man's Land to the foe in the last grim struggle. They fight the slow rear-guard action that covers retreat in disaster, and their stubborn valor always helps to turn the tide toward victory in the final triumph. The American farmer will give all that he has and all that he is to win this great war against war, this enormous struggle to win again the victory which we fondly believed we had twice won in the past.

This war was at first hard to understand. No armed foe invaded the United States. The night skies were not reddened by the burning byres and farmsteads of America. No raiding parties harried us of our cattle or horses. No saber rattlers insulted our women. It seemed to many of us that we were not at war, the thing was so far off, and it came to us in so unfamiliar a guise. We did not then realize what a giant war has become. We did not then know that a monster has arisen with a thousand arms, who could reach across the seas and could take from us three-fourths of everything we grew without our being aware of it and could follow up his robbery with invasion, subjugation, and national death. We did not at first realize this, but finally we saw that it was so.

If the Imperial German Government had made and enforced an order that no American farmer should leave his own land, that he could not haul a load of grain or drive a head of stock to town—if, in fact, the Kaiser had laid an interdict on all intercourse between farm and farm and between farm and town, he would have done only a little more than he accomplished by his interdict against American farmers' use of the sea. What was the order against which we rebelled when we went into this war? Look at the condition of the American farmer in the latter part of 1914 and the first half of 1915 and see.

When the war broke out, through terror and surprise and panic we gave up for a while the use of the sea as a highway. To a great extent we gave it up. And so long as we gave it up we, the farmers of America, were ruined. I know an Iowa farmer who sold his 1914 crop of 25,000 bushels of wheat for 70 cents a bushel. Farmers in the South sold their cotton for half the cost of producing it. All this time those portions of the world whose ports were open were ready to pay almost any price for our products; and when we finally rallied and set once more in motion the ships of the world prosperity returned to the farms of America. But prosperity never returned to the farmers of those nations which remained cut off from the seas.

Take the case of Australia, for instance. There three crops have remained unsold on the farms. There were no ships which could be spared to make the long voyage to Australia; and so, in spite of the efforts of the Government to save the farmers from ruin, grain has rotted in the open because there was no place in which to store it, and millions of tons have been spoiled by mice and other rodents.

Such conditions spell irretrievable disaster, in spite of all any Government can do. Such conditions would have prevailed in this country, from the outbreak of the war until now, gradually growing worse and worse, and deepening in disaster from hard times to universal stagnation and widespread famine, if our Government had not first resisted with every diplomatic weapon the encroachments of the German Government, and finally, when its cruel, piratical, and ruthless policy moved on from illegal restrictions to open and ruthless murder, if our Government had not drawn the sword.

Why did we draw the sword? Was it to keep up the price of wheat and cotton, and to protect trade only? If someone should order you to remain on your farm, and not to use the public highway, would your resistance be based only on the fear of loss in property, the profits from failure to market your crops, the inconvenience in not

being able to buy your supplies in town? By no means. You would fight to the last gasp, not to make money, but to be free.

When a man is enslaved, all he loses in money is his wages: but the white man has never been able to accept slavery for that reason. The white man has never yet been successfully enslaved. There rises up in him against servitude a resentment so terrible at the loss of his ownership of himself that death has always been preferable to slavery.

What the Imperial German Government offered the farmers of America in its ruthless submarine warfare was not the loss of profits, but slavery to the saber rattler of Potsdam. He purposed to make us slaves by murdering the people who take our products to market. By all the laws of civilized warfare commerce under a neutral flag was free from any hindrance except the legal interferences justified by war; but the Germans not only stopped merchant vessels, but sunk them. They not only sunk them, but they sunk them without warning. They not only sunk them without warning, but they sunk them without trace—the most devilish thing war has seen since the savages scalped our ancestors and threw screaming babies into the flames of burning cabins: for the German plan of sinking merchant vessels without trace is based on the murderer's maxim that dead men tell no tales; and it was executed by the massacre of men, women, and children, who, having committed themselves to the awful dangers of small boats in the open sea after their ships were torpedoed were then mercilessly raked with gun fire, and exterminated to the last poor unprotected, unpitied wretch!

These are the murders that stain the hands of the Kaiser and his advisers and minions. These outrages were perpetrated on neutral vessels; when all that civilized warfare gave the Germans a right to do even with the merchant vessel under a hostile flag, was to stop it at sea and under proper circumstances make it a prize of war; but to kill the civilians on board, even under a hostile flag, was nothing but stark, plain, unmitigated murder.

And these murders were committed in order that we might be enslaved! Having the right, according to the laws of war, to take the sea with his fleet, and fight the thing out, gun to gun, but being afraid to do so for fear that he might lose his fleet, being afraid or unable to stop the selling of our products to his enemies or to open his own ports to us by fair means, he declared that he would do it by the foulest methods ever resorted to in war. He declared the sea closed; and that he would keep it closed not by war, but by murder.

To have submitted would have cost us dear in prosperity; but that would have been the least of our loss.

We should have had to grovel before the German Government.

We should have had to accept murder as a thing against which we could not defend ourselves.

We should have allowed this new horror to become a part of all future wars, and have been responsible for its incorporation into international law.

We should have proved that because the fire which burns up our farms' usefulness is beyond the horizon, we will submit to the kindling of it.

We might have accepted the 70 cents or less for wheat, the 6 cents for cotton, and the like in case of misfortune, but we could not do it merely because we were commanded to do it.

By so doing we should have accepted degradation. We should have accepted at the behest of a half-crazed autocrat in Europe a lower standard of living in America. We should have given up at his command the hope for our children's education, the payment of the mortgage, the better school, the new church, that whole scheme of better rural life which is based on freedom to produce and freedom to market what we produce. We should have begun, after winning our freedom in our own revolution, after establishing a union on the foundation of liberty in the blood and tears of our war between the States, after wresting these States from the wilderness, after gaining religious freedom, and freedom of speech and of the press—after all these victories won by a people gathered from every nation of Europe in the name of freedom, we should have begun to knuckle under to autocracy. We should have basely yielded up our birthright as Americans.

Such a thought is intolerable, when we come to understand it. Peace at such a price would not be peace, but only a preparation for a future revolt against subjugation. Better any sort of war, better war forever than that. Let us remember little Holland, which fought the great empire of Spain for 80 years and finally won her liberty.

This, then, is the war in which we are fighting. Whenever the time comes for new sacrifices, let us remember that we fight for liberty. Not only for the liberty of the Belgians, the French, the Serbs, the Russians, the British, the Montenegrins, the Rumanians, the Italians, but of all nations, even for the German people themselves, and most of all for our own liberties. Not for our own liberties to-morrow, or next year, or 20 years from now, but for our freedom to-day. Not for the right to live in the future, but for the right to make a living this year.

German oppression had begun to pinch us before we entered the war. If we had not declared war, but had accepted the conditions of life ordered for us by the Kaiser, we should to-day be a poverty-stricken people, our factories shut down, our workmen unemployed, our people starving, our farmers ruined by the poverty of those for whose consumption we grew our crops. There is loss and sacrifice in the war; but there would have been far more of loss and sacrifice in accepting the German terms. We should have lost more in money than we have spent in the war, but we should have lost something far more precious. We should have lost our souls.

The farmers of this country could carry the war to a victorious conclusion even if all the rest of the Nation should quit. The rest will not quit; but we could win it without them if we had to do it.

The farmers of the United States can whip Germany.

We can whip them with guns.

We can whip them with our products.

We can whip them with our money.

Every farmer in the United States must remember that the war has a first mortgage on every cent he has. The last spare cent in the pockets of every farmer in America should be devoted to the war.

The Kaiser began foreclosing his mortgage on our farms when he declared ruthless submarine warfare, and the war is our answer to his bill of foreclosure.

Our contribution is, first our sons and brothers for the trenches; second, the last pound of food products which we can grow by mobilizing our scanty labor supply, utilizing the men, women, children, and townspeople about us; and third, money for Liberty bonds.

This is the crucial year of the war. Our soldiers are at the front, hundreds of thousands of them in the trenches, and 1,000,000 more ready to go. The whole burden of carrying on our own part in the war and of aiding our sister nations in arms rests on the United States Treasury.

If the Treasury fails or falters or finds itself unable to respond to every call upon it, the war is lost. Do you realize that?

Your son and all the Nation's sons are relying on the United States Treasury to furnish things with which they may fight.

Their lives are lost if the Treasury fails. Our country is lost if the Treasury fails.

Germany wins if the Treasury fails.

Therefore every cent you can rake and scrape together belongs to the Treasury that our soldiers may come back to us alive and victorious. This is literally true. We can whip the Germans with our money; but not with the money in our pockets or bank accounts. It must go into the United States Treasury in subscriptions to Liberty bonds.

While Gerard was our ambassador in Berlin the Kaiser said to him one day that he would stand no nonsense from America after the war.

Do you know what that means? It means that the Germans intend to subjugate this country if they come out of this war victorious.

The German Imperial Government has preached the superiority of Germany to all the rest of the world until the German nation is drunk with megalomania. One of their great writers expressed the prevailing, official view in 1903, when he wrote:

The Teutonic race is called upon to circle the earth with its rule, to exploit the treasures of nature and of human power, and to make the passive races servient elements in its cultural development. * * * Whoever has the characteristics of the Teutonic race is superior. All the dark peoples are mentally inferior, because they belong to the passive races. The cultural value of a nation is measured by the quantity of Teutonism it contains.

Are you one of the darker races?

Are you willing to be rated as one of the "servient elements" in Germany's cultural development?

You began to be one of the servient elements when peaceful people were slaughtered as they carried your produce to market. Was it because you belonged to a "passive race"?

This war is for the purpose of saying to that insane claim, with the roar of a hundred thousand cannon, "No!"

In von Tannenberg's book "Grossdeutschland," he says—and in saying it he voiced the orthodox official view—"It is Germany's task to-day to pass from the position of a European power to that of a world power. * * * A policy of sentiment is folly. Enthusiasm for humanity is idiocy. Right and wrong are notions needed in civil

life only. The German people is always right because it is the German people and because it numbers 67,000,000."

If the people of the United States should ever go insane enough to think such things of itself, it would be the duty of the rest of the world to crush the United States the moment it drew its sword and started out to establish itself on that superman basis. It would be its duty to crush us, not only for the sake of the world, but for our own sakes. Until this thing is crushed out of Germany all other nations will be looked upon by Junkerdom as they now look upon us, as "servient elements" in the development of German kultur, as "passive races," while they are the active ones, as "mentally inferior," as peoples in dealing with whom Germany will never be so foolish as to be guided by those notions of right and wrong which are needed in "civil life only."

Never since the Turks threatened to overwhelm Europe, perhaps not even then, was the world in such danger as now. Germany is not yet defeated. We must defeat her this year. Unless we win, our place in the world is lost and our history as one of the "servient nations" begins. We must withhold nothing from the support of the war. We must give our sons. We must bring forth food in abundance, multiplying our labor to that end. We must give into the Treasury of the United States every cent we can spare.

This summer the support of the war is up to the farmers; and Uncle Sam has never called upon the farmers in vain!



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